

September 2, 2008

**OBEY IN MERRILL FOR UPDATE
ON WORK AT THE BRIDGE RURAL DENTAL HEALTH CLINIC**

MERRILL, WI - Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) was in Merrill today for an update on the work being done at the new Bridge Rural Dental Health Clinic. Since 2001, Obey, the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, has secured nearly \$1.5 million to help expand dental care in Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, and Forest counties.

"We're facing a 'silent epidemic' of oral disease in this country because of a lack of available dental care, especially in rural areas and for the most vulnerable among us. Children have died because of infections brought on by the absence of dental services," said Obey. "That's why we've made improving access to dental care a priority, and why dental clinics, like this clinic here in Merrill, are so important. They help provide affordable dental care to thousands of Wisconsin families who would otherwise find it difficult or impossible to reach a dentist they could afford."

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for every American without medical insurance, three lack dental insurance, and there are 47 million Americans without health insurance today, Obey pointed out. "To put that in perspective," Obey added, "for what the government has spent on the war in Iraq, we could have provided affordable healthcare to every person in America."

The new Merrill clinic, which opened June 1st, is located in the St. Vincent de Paul Outreach Building at 401 West Main Street. With two dentists and full staff, the clinic provides comprehensive preventive and restorative dental services for patients with BadgerCare, Medicare, and those without insurance. The clinic anticipates seeing approximately 6,000 patients a year.

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